

Regulations Governing Solid Wood Packing Material to China

On November 1, 1999, the People's Republic of China announced new regulations for solid wood packing material (SWPM) imported from the United States and Japan. According to the new regulations, all SWPM, bracing, and dunnage made from coniferous trees will need to be heat-treated and certified in order to prevent further introduction of the pinewood nematode to China. Certification must be provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). All other types of packing materials must be accompanied by a statement from the exporter verifying there is no coniferous SWPM in the shipment. The new regulation is scheduled to take effect on any shipment leaving the United States on or after January 1, 2000.

APHIS is committed to assisting U.S. exporters in complying with the new Chinese regulations. APHIS is currently developing rules to facilitate continued trade with China and the movement of U.S. products to China. While these rules are being developed, emergency steps are being taken to minimize impact on U.S. commerce and prevent delays in shipments to China.

What the New Regulations Require

The Chinese regulations address the three following situations:

- If no SWPM is contained in the shipment (including small packages) the exporter can self-certify by placing the following statement on the invoice and/or bill of lading:

"This shipment contains no solid wood packing material."

- If there is SWPM in the shipment (including small packages), but it comes from a source other than coniferous trees, the exporter can self-certify by placing the following statement on the invoice and/or bill of lading:

"The solid wood packing material in this shipment is not coniferous wood."

- If coniferous SWPM is used, it must be heated to a core temperature of 56 °C (133 °F) for 30 minutes. Kiln drying often meets this requirement. However, exporters need to verify that the kiln drying process used meets the Chinese standard of 56 °C for 30 minutes. A Certificate of Heat Treatment verifying this treatment issued by APHIS must accompany the shipment. One Certificate of Heat Treatment is required for each shipment (including small packages) to China.

China has indicated that improperly certified shipments will be subject to one of three actions:

1. The shipment may be reexported;
2. The shipment may be separated from the packing material, at the importer's expense, and the packing material destroyed;
3. If the shipment cannot be returned or separated, then both the shipment and packing material may be destroyed.

APHIS' Certification Procedure

Exporters will need to complete the Certificate of Heat Treatment and have it endorsed at the exporter's nearest USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) office or USDA-APHIS-PPQ State cooperator office. Exporters are required to maintain copies of Certificates of Heat Treatment and documents supporting certification for a period of 1 year from the date the Certificate of Heat Treatment was issued. Exporters are strongly cautioned that if certification is not done prior to the shipment reaching the port of departure, certification by PPQ officers at the port of departure may be delayed because of the large volume of certificates that must be endorsed. Local PPQ office locations can be found on the APHIS Website at www.aphis.usda.gov/travel/aqi. PPQ State cooperators may be found at www.aphis.usda.gov/npb/npbmemb.

Certificate of Heat Treatment forms can be obtained on the APHIS Website at www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/chinaswp/hotbutton. Certificates may also be obtained from the PPQ fax vault at: (301) 734-4327 or (301) 734-3560. The form is located under "Other PPQ Programs" (select 2), "Domestic and Emergency Programs" (select 1), select 2, and enter document number 0553.

Minimizing Delays

Certification of each and every shipment that contains coniferous wood products will be a lengthy and time-consuming process. APHIS suggests the following options to prevent delays:

- Stop using SWPM, bracing, and dunnage and use composite or manufactured materials (e.g., plywood, oriented strand board, corrugated paperboard, plastic, etc.).
- If SWPM, bracing, and dunnage must be used, use hardwoods or woods other than coniferous (e.g. gum, cottonwood, poplar, maple, oak, etc.).
- If coniferous SWPM, bracing, and dunnage must be used, use coniferous wood that has been heat-treated to 56 °C for 30 minutes (kiln-dried lumber often meets this requirement). Maintain documentation of the treatment for APHIS certification. Exporters need to verify that the kiln drying process used meets the Chinese standard of 56 °C for 30 minutes.

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